

Academic Accommodations – In Brief

The University of California is required to engage in an “[Interactive Process](#)” to determine appropriate academic accommodations. During this process, students work with their [Disability Services Office \(DSO\)](#) to determine individualized accommodations on a case-by-case basis. The DSO then issues an [Accommodations Letter \(AL\)](#). If you are presented with a request for accommodation, the following guidance will ensure you, and the University, remain in compliance with our legal obligations.

<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>The Accommodations Process</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless you have a concern, implement accommodations immediately upon receipt of an Accommodation Letter (AL) • Promptly raise concerns with your Disability Services Office (DSO). Time is of the essence in providing accommodations. Do not deny an accommodation before consulting the DSO. • Do not ask for documentation or information about a student’s disability beyond the AL. • Do not disclose or comment upon a student’s disability or accommodation in the classroom or elsewhere except as necessary to implement an accommodation. • Do not provide disability-related accommodations without an AL; Refer students to the DSO. • Requests for flexibility for temporary illness (like a common cold) or non-disability related reasons are not accommodations under the ADA. 	<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Fundamental Alteration & Undue Burden</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental Alteration (FA) and Undue Burden (UB) defenses are rare. • When you have a concern, consult with the DSO before refusing to implement an accommodation. • The law requires a specific, deliberative process to determine whether an accommodation is an FA or UB. • Part of the FA process requires faculty to demonstrate the nexus between learning outcomes and course requirements. • If an accommodation is found to fundamentally alter a course/program, faculty must consider alternative accommodations. • Work with the DSO to implement interim accommodations during the FA/UB process. • Consult the campus ADA Coordinator, as necessary.
<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Auxiliary Aids & Services</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auxiliary Aids and Services (AAS) allow students to access and engage course materials and lectures, and effectively communicate in the classroom or laboratory setting. • Faculty and DSO must work together to ensure a student timely receives approved AASs. • Class Recording is an AAS specifically allowed under law and UC policy. • Class Recording is rarely a Fundamental Alteration or Undue Burden; Consult with the DSO before denying this as an accommodation. • Students approved for a Class Recording accommodation may be required to sign an agreement that prohibits unauthorized sharing of classroom recordings. 	<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Service & Support Animals</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service and Support Animals are treated differently under the law. • Service Animals are almost always allowed in public spaces (including classrooms) without an AL and can be successfully integrated into most laboratory settings. • Support Animals (commonly called Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)) may be allowed in a classroom or laboratory as an approved accommodation (i.e., an AL will document this need). • If a student brings an animal to class without an Accommodation Letter, contact the DSO before addressing an animal with the student. • Do not comment on, pet, or otherwise engage with a Service or Support Animal. Service Animals are working; Support Animals are providing disability-related support.

If you have questions about the university’s obligations under various [disability laws](#), contact your campus ADA Coordinator.

Academic Accommodations: Definitions

Accommodation Letter: The term Accommodation Letter (“AL”) describes the documents issued by the DSO to indicate a student has an approved accommodation. These may be called “Notices of Accommodation,” “Accommodation Letters,” “Instructor Letters,” etc. depending on the campus.

Disability: Is either (a) A [physical or mental impairment](#) that [substantially limits](#) one or more of the [major life activities](#) of an individual; (b) A record of such an impairment; or (c) Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Disability laws: The [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) and [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), protect the civil rights of people with disabilities in many aspects of public life, including higher education. References to these laws within the guidance documents refers to their text as well as the ADA [regulations](#), various judicial decisions that have interpreted them, and the [Office of Civil Rights](#)’ application of disability laws. The [Fair Employment and Housing Act](#) is also referenced.

Disability Services Office (DSO): The term Disability Services Office “DSO” describes all offices in the UC System that provide academic accommodations services to students. These offices may go by different names across the system, such as “Center for Accessible Education,” “Disabled Students Program,” or “Student Disability Center” to name a few. Please see the [DSO Contact](#) list for information on how to contact the office on your campus that approves academic accommodations.

Interactive Process: A term derived from Title I that most courts apply in the higher education context to mean a deliberative process between a university and a student requesting an accommodation which requires a fact-specific, case-by-case inquiry to arrive at a conclusion about implementation of the request.

Fundamental Alteration: Alterations or adjustments to courses or programs that either (a) modify academic requirements that are essential to the instruction being pursued or related to a licensing requirement, (b) lower academic standards, or (c) substantially alter the course or program.

Qualified Student with a Disability: A student with a [disability](#) who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of [auxiliary aids and services](#), meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a [public entity](#).